DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 078 760 HE 004 337

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TITLE	Effective Academic Change is Possible: An Example at Hiram College.
INSTITUTION	Toledo Univ., Ohio. Center for the Study of Higher Education.
PUB DATE	Oct 71
NOTE	8p.
JOURNAL CIT	Critique; v3 n4 p1-7 Oct 1971
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	College Students; *Curriculum Development; Educational Change; Educational Innovation; *Higher Education; *Integrated Curriculum; *Interdisciplinary Approach; *Student Responsibility
IDENTIFIERS	*Hiram College

ABSTRACT

In 1969, Hiram College implemented an integrated curriculum emphasizing interdisciplinary studies along with increased student freedom and responsibility. Factors contributing to the successful implementation of the curriculum, evaluative description of the curriculum and its goals, and the impact of the curriculum on Hiram students are discussed. Recommendations for similar program development suggest: (1) a significant reduction in the number of general education courses required for graduation, (2) emphasis on interdisciplinary and nondepartmental approaches, (3) opportunities for freshmen and faculty to get together in settings which facilitate modeling and joint intellectual endeavor, and (4) the college should be content to educate fully the student constitutency it now enrolls rather than setting as its goal the recruitment of "better" students. (MJM)

CRITIQUE

A Quarterly Memorandum

The Center for the Study of Higher Education

The University of Toledo

EDITORIAL OPINION

Attracting and retaining qualified students is an issue facing both public and private institutions of higher education. In the case of the relatively small, private liberal arts college, it may be argued that this is even heightened within the existing economic situation. One important aspect of attraction and retention is the college's recognition of student developmental needs and concerns. Such recognition can be reflected in the institution's curriculum.

The curriculum is the vehicle through which the institution attempts to reach its students both as a group and as individuals, formally and informally. For example, student "interaction" with faculty and other students can satisfy a number of personal needs and occur within the curriculum. Such is made clear when an entering freshman realizes that college per se is not all that he had hoped or feared but that he is engaged in a concentrated period of investigation where others have been and are at the present. He may be "lost" in math, but the chap next door may be also and together they have a common task in which they might approach the instructor.

As curriculum committees deliberate they must keep in mind entering freshmen as well as all students generally. The committee's collective insight should produce programs exhibiting more than a compromise among factions within the academic community. Curricular reform must be more than tinkering with new wine in old wineskins. Clearly curricular reform, if it is to be effective, requires the full support of all levels of the administration and faculty. But within that support and commitment, the student's social and personal needs as well as his academic skills development must be integrated into the curriculum.

Hiram College's recently adopted curriculum suggests that curricular reformation is a hard task, but one that can be successfully completed. It merits attention for at least two reasons. First, because the particular needs of the entering student were recognized and a curriculum was designed in an attempt to meet them. Second, the college placed its commitment to education and teaching above individual or group factions in developing a viable program. Hiram's curriculum may not be the "best" for all institutions for all times, but it certainly provides a shining example raising the relevant issues for consideration by us all.

CRITIQUE is published quarterly by The Center for the Study of Higher Education, The University of Toledo. The focus of the quarterly is on articles of medium length (around thirteen pages, double spaced) relating directly to concerns of interest to college and university faculty and administrators. Manuscripts focusing on practical issues within contemporary higher education are generally given priority over theoretical pieces. Such manuscripts may or may not be research oriented. Manuscripts to be considered for publication should be submitted in duplicate to the editor.
Editor: W. Frank Hull IV, Director.
Consulting editors: Richard R. Perry, John H. Russel, Robert T. Sandin, Richard E. White.
Volume III, Number 4, October, 1971.

EFFECTIVE ACADEMIC CHANGE IS POSSIBLE: AN EXAMPLE AT HIRAM COLLEGE

George A. Morgan*

In the fall of 1969, after two years of intensive discussion and planning, Hiram College launched a new integrated curriculum emphasizing interdisciplinary studies along with increased student freedom and responsibility.[1] All traditional discipline-oriented graduation requirements were eliminated in favor of several types of new interdisciplinary programs and more student electives.

The experience at Hiram is noteworthy in two ways. First, the Hiram curriculum provides a specific example of a successful implementation of several goals now coming into acceptance in American higher education. Second, this experience should provide encouragement to educators seeking to make significant academic changes within their own colleges. The Hiram program provides evidence that substantial innovation can take place at typical (that is, moderately selective, non-experimental) colleges with fairly traditional faculties and student bodies. Furthermore, such changes can win widespread student and faculty support; can have a generally positive impact on student satisfaction, achievement, and attitudes; and can be operated with little additional staff or cost. In fact, in the face of the enrollment and financial problems at most small private colleges, during the last two years Hiram has had its largest freshman classes in history and balanced budgets.

Planning the Curriculum

What were the factors contributing to the successful implementation of a new curriculum at Hiram College? Several can be listed:

1. Hiram College has both a relatively young and flexible faculty and a history of innovation, e.g., the single course study plan of the 1930's-50's.

2. There was general acknowledgment among faculty that the old "distribution requirements" were not accomplishing what had been hoped. Such awareness was based in part on data about student attitudes and satisfaction with the old program.

3. Hiram had a new president who encouraged the faculty to make a major change without trying to determine its form. His only guidelines were that the change should be imaginative and educationally sound, but not cost more to operate than the former program. He also pressed hard for the group to come up with a proposal within a reasonable length of time, i.e., about a year. Thus, the resulting proposal had the support of the top administration, without the stigma of being imposed "from the top."

4. It is significant that the general outline of the new curriculum was formed by a small task force of twelve faculty members selected by the President and Dean. This group represented a balance of disciplines, ages, and educational philosophies, but all members had in common a receptivity to reasonable change and the respect of a sizeable segment of the whole faculty.

5. Although it took six months of long, weekly meetings for this faculty group to become cohesive and really begin to communicate with each other, they were able to reach consensus on a bold, but integrated general plan, which could be financially managed by the college. The size of the group, the frequency and intensity of their meetings, and the reality-oriented guidelines provided by the president were important factors which led to a responsible, creative synthesis of ideas rather than a sterile compromise.

6. Following the general outline report from the small task force, most of the faculty and quite a few students were included on committees set up to flesh out each component of the program. This had the effect of greatly broadening the base of support for the program and probably also of improving the quality of the final proposal.

At this point, before the proposal was voted upon by students, faculty, and trustees, institutional research played a key role by developing a detailed model in response to questions about how the proposed programs could be staffed and how they would affect departmental offerings. The model based the allocation of staffing needs pri-

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[1]The curriculum has been supported in part by planning and development grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the George Gund Foundation, and by an evaluation grant from the Office of Education.

marily on data rather than personal considerations and, thus, it helped avoid most of the divisiveness that often comes with major changes.

The model delineated how many faculty load units would be needed to implement each aspect of the new program and then went on to show how the necessary staff could be obtained. The general strategy was to staff the new programs by eliminating some sections of introductory departmental courses (e.g., Freshman English) which no longer were required. The model also provided an estimate of the number of students who would, under the new curriculum, elect to take each of Hiram's new "introductory courses." This estimate was based upon stated student preferences for electives and upon departments' requirements for their majors. Furthermore, the model compared the number of sections of each course offered in the previous year with the number required under the new curriculum. With a net decrease in requirements in the new program, the model established that the new courses could be staffed and still leave each department with at least one section of each of its former introductory courses, for majors and electors. This staffing model was important not only in answering faculty questions prior to the approval of the curriculum, but it has served to elicit a clear, if tacit, agreement of faculty commitment to the new program.

An Evaluative Description of the Curriculum and Its Goals

The new Hiram curriculum has several major objectives. First, all students are encouraged, starting in the freshman year, to assume more responsibility for planning and conducting their own education. As ways of implementing this goal, the number and prescriptiveness of graduation requirements have been reduced and an opportunity for individualized major areas of concentration has been provided. Although students have more freedom of choice than is typical at most colleges, freshmen are supported by close relationships with the faculty and a strong advisory system which is built into the course structure. Second, the goal of making education more integrated and holistic is met by developing many topical and interdisciplinary courses and by encouraging cross-disciplinary majors. The college graduation requirements are now all interdisciplinary in nature. Third, an all-college emphasis on effective written communication and open, articulate discussion has been instituted. Fourth, the rational discussion of contemporary society (its heritage, problems, and future) is now at the thematic center of the curriculum. Fifth, faculty are encouraged to use new content and new approaches to teaching, to respond to students more individually, and to try cooperative teaching efforts. Finally, the focus of the Hiram curriculum has been shifted to the freshman year because of its importance in the development of student attitudes toward education and because it is the weakest part of most college programs, including Hiram's previous one.

In the first two years of the new curriculum, the Hiram freshman year was composed of four elective courses and six new curriculum courses. The latter of these types — the Institute and Colloquia have been small in group size while the Twentieth Century Course was common to the whole freshman class of about 350 and, thus, relatively large.

Since Hiram is on a 3-3 calendar, students usually take three concentrated courses each quarter. Table I shows a typical freshman program during each of the first two years of the new curriculum.

TABLE I
Freshman Program: New Curriculum

Mid-September	Fall Quarter	Winter Quarter	Spring Quarter
Institute	Colloquium I	Colloquium II	An Elective
	20th Century	20th Century	20th Century
	An Elective	An Elective	An Elective

During the ten days before the opening of the regular school year, the *Freshman Institute* has provided all freshmen an extended academic orientation to college and an intensive program of study and practice in written and oral communication skills. About one-third of the Hiram faculty members, representing most academic departments, have taken part, each working with a group of about thirteen students. One unusual feature of the Institute is the use of the film as a means of expression. Besides viewing and discussing several carefully chosen commercial films, each group of thirteen students has planned and produced its own 8mm. movie. Both students and faculty have agreed that the Institute has been successful in meeting its goals.

Each freshman has continued his small group learning experience in a *Freshman Colloquium* with eleven other students and a professor-adviser. Student preferences, based on one-page descriptions of each proposed topic, have been used to form the Colloquium groups. Among the sixty-eight Colloquium topics offered during the 1970-71 academic year were "Evolution and Modern Man," "History and Fiction," "Science and Human Involvement," "Modern Music: Noise Pollution or Art," and "Self and Society." Students have selected two such Colloquia, one in the first quarter and another with a different professor and group in either the second or third quarter.

There has been general agreement among students and faculty that Colloquia are interesting, valuable, and effective in meeting the four common goals of: 1) improving communication skills, 2) improving advising, 3) dealing seriously with substantial academic topics, and 4) exposing students to humane, moral, and aesthetic concerns. Freshmen have praised the informality of the Colloquia and suggested that there has been better student participation in them than in most courses.

The *Twentieth Century and Its Roots* has been a year-long, fifteen credit-hour course for all freshmen. It was designed to help students critically examine, from many perspectives, the major issues of our society, e.g., the search for meaning, the uses of technology, the individual and the state, and planet survival.

Three or four times a week the freshman class has met as a whole for lectures (often by outstanding visiting speakers), films, plays, debates, concerts, etc. Once or twice a week they met for discussion in small groups, led by upperclassmen or faculty. Students have been encouraged to attend the sessions and read widely, but, with the exception of required position papers, they have been free to get what they wanted out of the course because there were no exams and little penalty for lack of attendance.

The Twentieth Century Course has been the least successful and most problematic of the new freshman programs. However, ratings of student satisfaction with the course have been about the same as with the required courses under the old curriculum. Even many freshmen agree that they did not respond as well to the freedom and the demands of personal responsibility as had been hoped by the planners of the course.

The freshmen also have taken four traditional, departmental courses as electives, often in preparation for a particular major area of concentration. As expected, they have been quite satisfied with these courses.

The emphasis on the holistic, interdisciplinary approach to education has not been limited to the freshman programs. This philosophy is further implemented by offering a variety of upperclass interdisciplinary courses, by giving some credit for active participation in a wide range of activities outside the usual course structure, and by encouraging students to develop individualized topical or multidisciplinary major areas of concentration. It is too early to know much about the success of these aspects of the new curriculum, but students and faculty have expressed general satisfaction with them.

Prompt and continuous feedback about student and faculty attitudes toward the components of the curriculum has enabled Hiram to adjust the programs in progress and to analyze why some aspects have been more successful than others.

It may seem somewhat surprising that the Hiram Freshman Institute has been such a successful part of the program, given the general difficulty colleges seem to have with orientation programs. However, the Institute has been a good orientation in large part because it has been only indirectly an orientation. That is, it really has been a course to which both faculty and students have come with expectations for hard and meaningful work. The goals of the Institute have been clear, attainable, and short range. This has helped make the program rewarding. The Institute's success probably has been less a result of the planned lectures, films, discussions, etc. (which were rated rather ambivalently), and more a result of the fact that the whole life of the College has been focused for this period on the freshmen and on getting them ready for college — academically, socially, and personally. The usual orientation lectures and social events seldom seem to provide this atmosphere. No doubt the prospect of not having to take English composition, if they are successful in the Institute, has also been an important motivator.

Before commenting on the Colloquium program and the Twentieth Century Course, it is important to emphasize that the intimate nature of the popular Colloquia has been made financially possible by the large lecture format of the Twentieth Century Course. The initial hope was that the relevance of the topics and the mixture of visiting speakers, films, etc., would compensate for the large size and consequent relative passivity inherent in the Twentieth Century Course, but as stated before, there has been only moderate satisfaction with it.

In both the Colloquia and the Twentieth Century Course, freshmen have been given extensive freedom and responsibility for their own learning. Although there has been some faculty concern about academic rigor in the Colloquia, most students and faculty have adjusted well to the informality and the pass or no credit grading system, perhaps due to the close contact and support of

the professor-adviser. However, in the Twentieth Century Course, many freshmen seem to have been unable to cope with the responsibility of working without the threat of exams, required attendance, etc. In retrospect, it was probably a mistake to place freshmen so much on their own in a large course like this, but perhaps even the struggle and partial failure (to seize the opportunity for learning on their own) was an important lesson which will have positive long term effects on the students.

Because the Twentieth Century Course dealt with the problems of our society, many students have felt that it should involve direct social action rather than listening, reading, analyzing, and discussion. It may be that the course has been less successful than hoped for partially because of the gap between the students' unrealistic expectations and the fact that this was, after all, only a college course which could hardly be expected to provide the solutions to the world's problems.

Early experience with the Twentieth Century Course and upperclass Interdisciplinary Courses makes one pessimistic about the possibilities for successful team-teaching or even successful individual teaching in cases where the syllabus is designed by others than those who do the actual teaching. The Hiram Colloquia work well not only because they are small and informal, but also because each professor picks his own topic with the only restriction being that he work toward a common set of goals. Both faculty and students seem to prefer courses taught by a single person. However, faculty certainly learn from each other when they work together, and students surely learn important lessons about the complexity and multifaceted nature of reality when learning from more than one professor at a time. Unfortunately, there is no solution to this dilemma immediately recognizable.

Partially on the basis of analysis like the preceeding, a number of modifications in the program have been planned for this present academic year. For example, the Twentieth Century Course has been broken into class sections, with the total group meeting only once a week. The content of the course has been considerably changed and students have the option of taking part of the course in their sophomore year. Student and faculty comments led to a closer integration of the Institute and first Colloquium, but both continue relatively unchanged in spite of the fact that they are quite costly and resources are scarce.

The Impact of the Curriculum on Hiram Students

With the support of a research grant from the Office of Education, an evaluation of the impact of the new program on students has been attempted. The basic design of this study involved a comparison of student development during the last few years of the former, traditional curriculum with student development during the first two years of the new program. Of course, such research is fraught with difficulties, but the attempt was necessary and worthwhile, especially since thorough evaluations of curricular innovations are seldom done.

The first two classes of students under the new curriculum were quite similar to the immediately preceeding ones in ability, demographic factors, expected satisfactions, and most attitudes. These similarities have helped make valid comparisons of the relative impact of the old and new curricula possible.

The research strategy has been to compare old and new curriculum students in the three broad areas: 1) satisfaction with various aspects of Hiram; 2) intellectual, social, and emotional attitudes and values; and 3) academic achievement in the traditional general education fields. Since the objectives of the curriculum deal primarily with the attitudinal and personal development of students, it was predicted that this research would reveal increased satisfaction and stronger intellectual attitudes without any loss in traditional academic achievement. The results, which are summarized in the following paragraphs, generally support these predictions.

As implied above, student and faculty satisfaction with Hiram and the new curriculum were measured at several times and with several instruments. Table II summarizes the results of freshman end of year responses to the ten-item satisfaction scales of the College Student Questionnaire, Part 2 developed by Educational Testing Service. For ease of interpretation, the scale scores have been converted to percentiles based upon the ETS national norms for institutions.

TABLE II

CSQ Satisfaction Scores for Hiram Freshmen*

Scale	Old Curriculum May, '69	New Curriculum May, '70	New Curriculum May, '71
Faculty	42%	95%	93%
Administration	73%	97%	69%
Students	12%	62%	62%

*Percentiles are based on the National Institutional Norms.

As the table indicates, under the old curriculum Hiram freshmen were about average, compared to the national sample, in their satisfaction with the faculty; they were above average in their satisfaction with the Hiram administration; but their satisfaction with other Hiram students was much below the national average. At the end of the first year of the new curriculum, there was significantly increased satisfaction in all three areas. As portrayed in Table II, Spring 1970 Hiram freshman satisfaction with the faculty and administration was higher than at 95% of the colleges in the national norm group. In May, 1971, Hiram freshmen again rated the faculty very highly, but satisfaction with the administration, while still relatively high, had slipped back to its old curriculum level. Ratings of other students remained much higher than during the last year of the old curriculum.

A short, locally developed questionnaire to measure satisfaction with various aspects of the College and the new curriculum has also been employed. It has been given to students when they first enter Hiram (in order to be able to take expectations into account) and again at several later times. Average freshman ratings of expected satisfaction have been high and quite similar to corresponding ratings of expectations by freshmen who entered under the old curriculum. However, during the first two years of the new program there has been significantly less disillusion and more end of the freshman year satisfaction with all aspects of the College which are related to the academic program, i.e., faculty, courses, adviser, and graduation requirements. There is also evidence of generally higher satisfaction during the last two years from sophomores, seniors, and faculty.

The results in the area of attitude and value change are less clear, but they give some support to the contention that the new curriculum has had more impact on students than the old one. To illustrate, freshmen have taken the College Student Questionnaire at the beginning and end of each of the last three years. During the first new curriculum year (1969-70), students became significantly more liberal and socially concerned than freshmen had during the last old curriculum year. However, these effects were not replicated in 1970-71 and consequently it seems likely that they were at least partially due to situational factors like the tragedy at nearby Kent State, which had occurred only a couple of weeks before the Spring 1970 testing.

In order to compare differences in intellectual values and social-emotional attitudes at the end of two years under the new curriculum with two years under the old program, the Omnibus Personality Inventory was administered to sophomores in May of 1969 and in May of 1971. The new curriculum sophomores were significantly higher than the old curriculum group on four (thinking introversion, theoretical orientation, complexity, and autonomy) out of the six OPI intellectual disposition categories. There were no differences between the groups on the other two "intellectual" categories — estheticism and religious liberalism. In addition, the new curriculum sophomores felt they were better adjusted and less anxious than the old curriculum sophomores. All of these differences seem to imply that the new curriculum has had a desirable effect on students. However, this conclusion has to be tentative since freshman OPI scores for the old curriculum group are not available and it is thus possible that some of the difference might have been present at entrance.

Since one of the main goals of the new curriculum is to promote good communication and since students do not take the traditional freshman English courses, it seemed important to measure their ability to use clear, effective English at the end of the freshman year. The CEEB English Composition test was designed for that purpose. Table III shows that the new curriculum freshmen scored higher, relative to their high school senior scores, than the old curriculum group which had the presumed advantage of two terms of college English courses. Nevertheless, the results are somewhat discouraging in that few students showed marked improvement, with the majority of old curriculum students actually declining. This is probably due partially to lower test taking motivation in college and partially to the failure of traditional college English programs to deal significantly with grammar, word usage, etc.

TABLE III

Mean English Achievement Scores for Freshmen Who Took the Tests in Both High School and College

Average Score	Old Curriculum Freshmen	New Curriculum Freshmen
High School English	543	528
College English	534	541
Change	—9	+13

Even though, by our elimination of the distributive general graduation requirements, Hiram has placed less emphasis on traditional achievement, it was thought necessary to insure that such achievement would not deteriorate badly. In fact, it turns out that, when entering scores are taken into account, the only significant difference between the old and new curriculum sophomores on the ETS Survey of College Achievement was in favor of the new program on the mathematics scale. This difference is probably only indirectly attributable to the new curriculum.

Conclusions and Recommendations

It appears quite clear that Hiram's new curriculum has led to greater student satisfaction with the academic program at Hiram. In these times, this result by itself might be enough to recommend the program. This higher satisfaction is due only in part to the slightly higher expectancies of the new curriculum freshmen. The main reason seems to be that the new curriculum more nearly lived up to the typical high expectations of entering freshmen than was the case with the old curriculum or, one might argue, with the academic program at most colleges.

It could be suggested that students are more satisfied, not because the program is more stimulating, more personally rewarding, or more intellectually challenging, but rather because it is easier. In this regard it is most encouraging to remember that new curriculum students consistently scored higher than old curriculum students on the intellectual attitude and value scales. When this is combined with increased satisfaction with the academic program, stronger intellectual values, and no loss in traditional achievement, one can dismiss the contention that the program is liked mainly because it is easy. It seems that Hiram has come at least a short way toward increasing students' "love for learning."

Since Hiram's new program has been effective, it points to basic changes which others might want to consider.

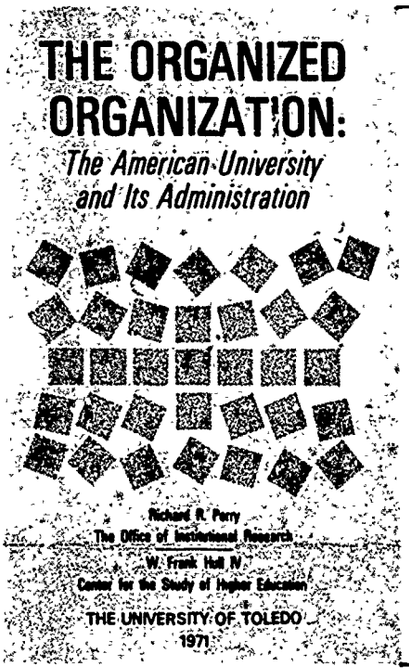
First, the Hiram experience would recommend a significant reduction in the number of general education courses r e q u i r e d for graduation. Although there may be some small loss in traditional academic achievement in areas in which students choose to take few courses, this loss is likely to be much less than previously feared. Furthermore, the positive efforts of generally higher satisfaction and greater intellectual interest in the chosen subject matter areas probably more than offset the potential loss of breadth in traditional achievement. Fewer required courses make students take more responsibility for their education and, therefore, should lead them to be more personally involved in it.

Second, interdisciplinary and nondepartmental approaches should be used as much as possible for meeting the common goals of the college curriculum. Knowledge will always be viewed as compartmentalized and irrelevant as long as students feel, for example, that good writing is done only in English class and that the discussion of moral issues takes place only in religion class.

Third, opportunities for freshmen and faculty to get together in settings which facilitate modeling and joint intellectual endeavor must be maximized. The small class had always been an ideal of the American college but what is required here is more than small group lectures. The settings, like the Institute and the Colloquia, should get the freshman actively involved in the learning process with the professor.

Finally, it is my personal conclusion that a college should be content to educate fully the student constituency it now enrolls rather than setting as its goal the recruitment of "better" students. One of the major results of our evaluation research is that it indicates that *how* things are done at a college does make a difference. A change in the curriculum can substantially change the type and amount of impact that a college has on students, even with essentially the same faculty and entering students. This result undercuts the commonly held contention that it does not matter what you do because everything depends on having good students and good faculty.

Hiram College now has an effective and workable curriculum which, through its increased flexibility and interdisciplinary emphasis on general education, meets the needs of contemporary students. However, it takes a tremendous amount of planning and energy not only to get a major change started, but also to sustain it. While there is always the possibility of slipping back toward the easier-to-do traditional ways, Hiram's faculty and staff are continuing to work hard toward more effective and comprehensive innovation.



PUBLICATION ANNOUNCEMENT

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Toledo: Office of Institutional Research and The Center for the Study of Higher Education, 1971

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